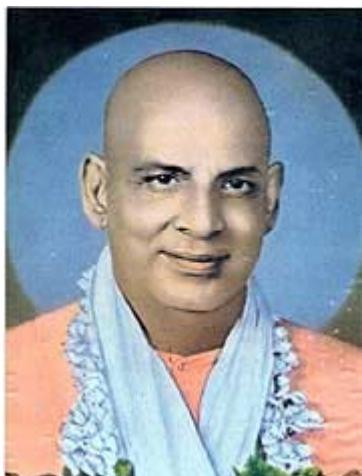


MEDITATION AND ITS UTILITY IN DAILY LIFE WITH PRACTICAL HINTS

By

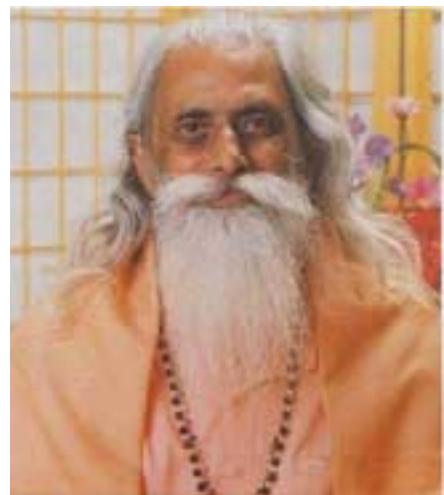
Sri Swami Premananda



Sri Swami Sivananda
Founder of
The Divine Life Society



**SERVE, LOVE, GIVE,
PURIFY, MEDITATE,
REALIZE**
So Says
Sri Swami Sivananda



Sri Swami Premananda

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**Swami Premananda's 'Meditation Classes' have become
very popular and there is a great demand. This booklet
will help aspirants and seekers**

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MEDITATION AND ITS UTILITY IN DAILY LIFE

Meditation is not for a few but is necessary for all human beings. The inner self of a person touches the Higher Self (the Param-Tattwa) during deep sleep daily. This unknown touch recharges the battery of man. So, when he gets up from his sleep, he feels that he is refreshed, full of strength and relaxed. This is a natural process for all persons alike. If one could not sleep properly, he feels disturbed and is in a sort of weariness. It is the experience of every man, whether he is rich or a beggar, a literate or an illiterate, an executive or a labourer, a farmer or a business man, a housewife or a huckster. So, every man needs peace, strength, ability to discharge his duties and for tranquillity of mind. So, a wonderful discovery of man is to keep his inner self in touch with the SOURCE in a wakeful state for longer periods continuously through specific type of systematic practices. This is called the art of meditation. And such a person is said to be a YOGI without any discretion/distinction of caste, creed, colour and country.

Dhyanam nirvishayam manah—That state of the mind, wherein there are no *Vishayas* or sensory thoughts, is meditation.

Whether oriental or occidental, Hinduism or Mohammedanism, Buddhism or Jainism, Christianity or Judaism, Shinto-ism or any other ‘ism’, the spiritual purpose and meaning is to lead an individual soul to the ecstatic communion with the Universal Divinity or ONE TRUTH, the SOURCE. A continuous flow of perception of thought is Dhyana—*Tatra pratyayaikatanata dhyanam*. It is the flow of continuous thought of one object or God or Atman or Supreme Source—*Tailadharavat*. According to Raja Yoga, meditation is the seventh rung or step in the ladder of Yoga. One cannot attain this state unless he knows the art of “Concentration”. What is concentration?—*Desa bandhas-chittasya dharana*. Concentration is fixing the mind on an external object or an internal point continuously, without interruption or break for twelve seconds. So, an aspirant has to develop himself in concentration, which itself is changed into meditation, if his state of keeping the mind focused at one object/point/subject continuously and spontaneously for $12 \times 12 = 144$ seconds. It is termed as ‘Dhyana’ in Sanskrit scriptures, which comes from the root ‘Dhi’. In English we generally call it ‘intellect’ which is the basic root with different derivations in different practices. However, ‘Buddhi’ (reasoning faculty) is said to be directly based on this root term; yet this term is used liberally by all systems of Yoga, which is central theme of all mystic techniques leading one to higher levels of spiritual consciousness with profound depths of spiritual expansion and takes one to God-realisation or Self-realisation.

Meditation may be objective, or on qualities or purely subjective or one’s own breath. In objective meditation the *Sadhaka* meditates upon an idol or picture of his *Ishta devata*—may be Lord Shiva, Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, Christ, Buddha or any other god or goddess. For him, the idol is something alive, vibrating with supreme reality, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent. He may meditate upon the beatitude, the qualities, the activities of his *Ishta-devata*. Or he may meditate upon the all-pervading pulsating Supreme Energy which is within him and without, permeating everywhere. This is subjective meditation. Similarly on his breath while inhaling and exhaling with

MINIMAL SILENCE. All meditations are good; what counts is the intensity and unbroken continuity of meditation.

An aspirant has to rest his soul on the bosom of the Lord, to bathe in the bliss of Divine ecstasy, to drown his ego in the ocean of eternity, to draw sustenance and strength from the SOURCE to attain whatever he is capable of achieving. A *Sadhaka* should meditate regularly, chew and digest what he has learnt, to transform what he has learnt into wisdom, to apply that wisdom to solve the problems that cross his path daily. Says F.W. Robertson: "It is not the number of books you read, nor the variety of sermons you hear, nor the amount of religious conversation in which you mix, but it is the frequency and earnestness with which you meditate on these things till the truth in them becomes your own and part of your being, that ensures your growth."

A sincere spiritual seeker meditates to realise the Ultimate Reality to unravel the mystery of life and death, to understand in the bottom of his heart, what is Truth. Once he knows Truth, he knows the Ultimate Reality, he becomes That, and there is nothing more to know. A person who has realised Brahman, becomes Brahman, and lives in Brahman. Knowing is being. That is the highest state.

India has been fortunate to have produced many saints and seers who had realised the Truth and for more or less time lived in a state of Divine Ecstasy. Even during the past hundred years people have witnessed such saints like Paramahansa Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ramatirtha, Sri Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi, Swami Ramdas, Swami Sivananda and several others of world fame. Ramakrishna would while talking relapse into *Samadhi* and often prayed to his Divine Mother not to draw him frequently into Her Bosom so that he can converse with his disciple, particularly his darling Naren later known to the world as Swami Vivekananda so that he could prepare a band of workers to spread his message, the holy message of India. Swami Ramatirtha was often seen in a state of ecstasy during last seven years of life in India and United States. Swami Sivananda was another who would often sing and dance or be just be quiet in divine ecstasy. There have been more in India and quite a few messengers of God in other parts of the world.

Meditation and concentration are often treated as synonymous. However, I have drawn earlier a distinct line between concentration and meditation. In further explanation when one brings to bear all his thought waves on a single point or spot like a laser beam where the scattered rays of light are concentrated, it is concentration. Every body needs concentration to understand, assimilate and apply any information, any knowledge. When the concentration is prolonged for 144 seconds, it is called meditation and when extended to 144 multiplied by 144 i.e. 20736 seconds = 345.6 minutes, it is said to reach the state of *Samadhi*. According to *Ashtanga Yoga* comprising two main parts of Hatha Yoga—*Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana* and *Pranayama* covers the first one, whereas *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi*, is the second part. There is no equivalent word in English language for *Samadhi*. Concentration is the sixth, Meditation the seventh and *Samadhi* the eighth and last stage of Yoga when the *Sadhaka* is united with the *Supreme Being*. It shows that concentration leads to Meditation, similarly prolonged constant meditation leads to *Samadhi*. In other Yogas *Manana*, *Nididhyasana*, *Upasana*, *Chintana*, *Dhyana*—these terms are used in different Yogas with subtle differences in their techniques. *Manana* is a sort of reflection. It is just

to chew the cud slowly and nicely. It is done through into intense practice of *Manana*. *Chintana* is also a sort of reflection and meditation to assimilate the thoughts in consciousness for proper and significant impression with profound understanding. Intense meditation on the Self or Brahman or ANY SPIRITUAL ILLUMINED PERSONALITY is termed as 'Nididhyasana'. As Saint Francis of Assisi did. 'Upasana' stands for devout meditation which is being used in both i.e., *Jnana Yoga Sadhana* and *Bhakti Yoga*. *Upasana* means 'sitting near by'. In *Jnana Yoga Sadhana* the seeker has to sit near the Self or Brahman; whereas in *Bhakti Yoga* a devotee has to sit by the side of God.

A keen and true regular practitioner (*Sadhaka*) will attain quick and sure results, when he proceeds properly stage by stage under the guidance of his GURU or master. The first four parts are meant to purify the mind and keep the body strong and fit to receive and retain the power of the DIVINE. Many moderns, however, equate Yoga with the practice of few *asanas* and *pranayamas*. This is not sufficient for spiritual uplift. Yet, it is better to practise *asanas* and *pranayamas* for health's sake than not to do anything at all. But Yoga is really first to withdraw one's mind from the objects of senses (*pratyahara*), practice concentration, prolong the period of concentration under proper guidance to reach the stage of meditation and finally become one, unite (Yoga to join to unite) with the Supreme Reality, the TRUTH.

Thus meditation is not meant merely for the recluse, the ascetic, the renouncer. It is of utmost important in man's day-to-day life. It is of immense help to a student, a youth, an old man. A man who can meditate will become a better manager, a better businessman, a better executive and, above all, a better man. Conversely, if a person cannot meditate, he will lack composition, courage and confidence to achieve his goal. Nowadays, several medical doctors and psychologists advise to their patients suffering from nervousness, unusual irritation, disordered mind, fear and inferiority complex and lack of self-confidence to meditate in a specific manner along with the medical treatment. So, the meditation is very necessary these days when man leads a life of tension and complexity.

Every morning and evening, preferably at dawn and dusk, sit down in a comfortable posture with your backbone straight, relax each and every limb of your body, and then your mind, and sit unmoved, in the same pose, as long as you can. It is always better to invoke your *Guru* (master) and *Ishta Devata* first, when you sit for meditation for their blessings and guidance and gratefully thank them again when you finish the meditation. Gradually, increase the time of your meditation. It is easier to relax your limbs of the body but not so easy to relax your mind. This process of relaxation, stillness and body awareness will automatically reduce the speed of your breathing, which, in turn, will help in meditation. So many thoughts will cross your mind now and then. They may even disturb you. Do not be afraid. Try to remain calm and watch them with equanimity. Let them come, let them go. Do not fight to free your mind from thought waves. Try to be indifferent to them. But do not observe these thoughts with equanimous mind. Gradually, automatically the flitting of thoughts across the canvas of your mind will diminish. After sometime—sooner than later—you will be absorbed in your *Ishta-Devata* if your meditation is objective, or in your Being, if your meditation is subjective. Once, you get the taste of it, believe me, you will like to taste it more and more and more.

May God Almighty and All-merciful and the Most Revered Gurudev, help you, THEY WILL.

MEDITATION PRACTICE

I. “Silence Is The Great Revelation”—Lao-Tse

1. Scripture as the revelation of God.
2. Discover the revelation that silence brings.
3. Silence offers, one must attain silence. It is NOT EASY.

Comfortable Posture. Close eyes for 10 minutes. Observe total silence of Heart and Mind. Describe ‘Silence’ in terms of your attempts. Experience may infinitely be varied. You have to still the constant wandering of your mind. To quiet and emotional turmoil. On approaching frontiers of silence there may be PANIC and WITHDRAWAL. You may have frightening experience. NO REASON TO BE DISCOURAGED. Wandering thoughts are a great revelation. Take time to EXPERIENCE this wandering mind and TYPE of wandering it indulges. SOMETHING ENCOURAGING—awareness of mental wandering, inner turmoil and inability to be still shows that you have small degree of silence within you. AGAIN close your eyes, become aware of wandering mind for two minutes. Now sense the silence that makes it possible to be aware of wanderings of your mind.

MINIMAL SILENCE—as it grows, it reveals more and more rather it reveals yourself to you. You will have ATTAINMENTS—like WISDOM, SERENITY, BLISS, GOD, PRECAUTION: you shall have no talk and no discussion. Inhale and exhale deep and slow breathing throughout. Again close your eyes for five minutes. SEEK SILENCE. Now see your success—whether more or less. *Don't seek ANYTHING SENSATIONAL.* In fact, do *not seek at all.*

Limit yourself to observing. Take in everything that comes to your awareness whether big, small, trite or ordinary. CONTENT of awareness is less important than the *quality* of awareness. As quality improves, so silence deepens, you will experience. You will discover, to your delight, that revelation is not knowledge. It is power: a *mysterious power that brings transformation.*

II. Body Sensations

One must become aware of certain body sensations of which one is explicitly not aware. To go around by yourself to become conscious of your toes, your feet, your legs, your knees, your thighs, your buttocks, your waist, your stomach, your chest, your shoulders, your fingers (starting from the tips), your forearms, your elbow, your arms, your full back, then again your shoulders, your neck, your chin, your lips, your nose, your cheeks, your ears, your eyes, your forehead, your head, upper side of your head and backside of your head. Do not dwell for more than two or three

seconds on each part of your body. REPEAT it again and again for five minutes. This act of yours brings a sense of relaxedness. BIGGEST ENEMIES: Nervous tension, living too much in *head* i.e., to remain conscious of the thinking and imagination and to remain conscious far too little of the activities of the senses. It is a must to remain in the PRESENT and not in *past and future*. One must master this technique of sense awareness. One must learn to get out of the area of thinking and imagination and move into the area from *Head to Heart* i.e., feeling, sensing, loving and intuiting where contemplation takes birth, prayer becomes transforming power and a source of delight and peace. A few of you may feel an increase in *Tension*. Note what part of your body is tense and see exactly what the tension feels like. Become aware of the fact you are tensing and note exactly how you are doing this. Note means not to reflect but to feel and sense. You pick up no sensation. Why? Your sensibility has been dead from so much living in *head*. *Our skin* is covered with *trillions* (3 Powers of a million) of bio-chemical reactions—that we call sensations and you are finding it hard to pick up even a few of them? You have hardened yourself not to feel may be due to some emotional hurt or conflict that you have long since forgotten. And your perception, your awareness, power of concentration and attention are still gross and underdeveloped. It is as a means for attaining relaxation and stillness. GET IN TOUCH WITH SENSATIONS AGAIN AND AGAIN without naming limbs and organs as you sense. If you notice an urge to move or to shift your posture or position—do not give into it. Do continue this exercise for a few minutes. You will gradually feel a certain stillness in your body. Go on with your AWARENESS exercise and leave taking care of stillness. If you are distracted, get back to awareness of body sensations, moving from one to another, until your body becomes still once again, your mind quietens, you are able to sense again stillness that brings peace and a foretaste of contemplation and of God. HOWEVER, DO NOT explicitly rest in the stillness. Because resting in it can be relaxing and even delightful. BUT in it there is DANGER of mild trance or mental blankness which is not good for contemplation. It is like a sort of self-hypnosis that has nothing to do either with the sharpening of awareness or with contemplation. IMPORTANT: DO NOT DELIBERATELY seek stillness or silence within you and not EXPLICITLY REST in it when it occurs. BUT SEEK SHARPENING OF AWARENESS. In moments, stillness becomes so powerful that all exercise and all your efforts become impossible. Then it is no longer you who go in quest of stillness. *But stillness* takes possession of you. THEN you may safely, and profitably, let go of all effort and surrender to this overpowering stillness within you.

III. Deepening Exercise—Body Sensations

The body sensations exercise is so simple, in fact, as to prove disillusioning. To advance in it, you have to preserve in simplicity. Resist temptation to seek novelty, but try to seek DEPTH. You have to practise second exercise over a long period of time. You may ask for benefits. *Don't ask*. Do what you are asked to and you will discover yourself. TRUTH is found less in words and explanations than in action and experience. So get to work, with faith and perseverance. Close your eyes. Repeat previous exercise of body sensations for five to ten minutes.

NOW CHOOSE JUST ONE SMALL AREA OF YOUR FACE, PICK UP EVERY SENSATION. At the beginning you may not feel. Continue previous exercise, then enter in this area. *Be aware of the type of sensations that emerge; itching, pricking, burning, pulling, vibrating, throbbing, numbness.....* If your mind wanders, bring it patiently back to exercise.

IV. Thought Control

By doing previous awareness exercises, your mind may be distracted. To deal with such situation, you shall keep your eyes half closed—resting on an object or one spot three feet ahead of you. You are not to focus on the object/spot. By doing this, you may have trouble with your wandering mind. No cause for alarm. You practise control over your wandering mind with patience and perseverance. Gradually you will succeed.

To deal with distraction of mind you may follow any of the two ways:

- a) You have to follow your thoughts as a puppy in the streets follows any pair of legs it finds in motion. It does not care for the direction where they are moving. After some seconds, you shall make yourself aware that you are thinking. You may say to yourself interiorly that I am thinking thinking thinking. By this you will be aware that thinking process is going on.
- b) The other way to overcome distraction is to observe your thoughts as a man stationed at his window watching passers by on the street. After doing this for a while, you shall keep yourself aware that you are thinking thinking thinking You may do any of the above two exercises for not more than five minutes. Thinking tends to stop by making yourself aware of it. A distraction charged with strong emotion: love, fear, resentment, sorrow—will not easily yield to this exercise. Other exercises discussed hereinafter shall help you in that.

V. Breathing Sensations

(Become aware of sensations in various parts of your body)

Become aware of the air as it comes in and goes out through your nostrils. Do not concentrate on the air as it enters in lungs, but limit awareness to nostrils breath. Do not control your breathing. Don't attempt to deepen it. It is not breathing exercise, but breathing awareness. Whenever you are distracted, return with vigour to your task to enable you to make you aware of each breath. Continue this exercise for ten to fifteen minutes. This exercise may be difficult for some of you in comparison to previous exercises; but it is most rewarding in sharpening awareness, bringing calmness and relaxation. **HOWEVER**, in attempting breathing awareness **DO NOT** tense your muscles. Determination must not be confounded with nervous tension. You may be distracted at the beginning but you must keep returning again and again to the awareness of your breathing the mere effort involved in doing this—will bring beneficial effects that you will gradually notice.

After developing some proficiency in this exercise move on to somewhat difficult and more effective variant:

- a) Become aware of the sensation of the air passing through your nostrils. Feel its touch—in which part of the nostrils you feel the touch of the air while inhaling and in what part of the nostrils you feel the touch of the air while exhaling
- b) Become aware of the warmth or coldness of the air its coldness when it comes in, and its warmth when it goes out.

c) Also be aware of quantity of air that passes through one nostril is greater than the amount that passes through other

d) Be sensitive and alert to the slightest, lightest touch while inhaling and exhaling STAY with this awareness for ten to fifteen minutes. In case you put in more time, you will get better results. But DO NOT stay on breathing awareness alone for many hours over a period of more than two or three days. Although this exercise brings you great peace and a sense of depth and fullness that delights you but prolonged concentration on breathing is likely to produce *hallucinations or to draw out material from the unconscious that you may not be able to control.*

AWARENESS AND CONTEMPLATION AND PRAYER

Prayer means a communication with God that is carried on mainly through the use of words and images and thoughts. Contemplation means a communication with God that makes a minimal use of words, images and concepts altogether. The exercise of awareness of body sensations or breathing can be termed as communication with God. Many mystics tell us that, in addition to the mind and heart with which we ordinarily communicate with God, we are endowed with a mystical mind and mystical heart, a faculty which makes it possible for us to know God directly, to grasp and INTUIT Him in His very being—apart from all thoughts, concepts and images.

Ordinarily all our contact with God is indirect—through images and concepts. To be able to grasp Him beyond these thoughts and images is the privilege of this faculty—a *mystical heart*. In most of us this *Heart* lies dormant and undeveloped. If it is awakened, it would be straining towards God and, given a chance, would impel the whole of our being towards Him. Hence, it needs to be developed, it needs to have the dross that surrounds it removed so that it can be attracted towards the ETERNAL MAGNET. To be near or discover Eternal Magnet, one is to find means of silencing the mind. And to silence the mind is an extremely difficult task. How hard it is to keep the mind away from thinking, which is producing thoughts in a never-ending stream. But it is also said that one thorn is removed by another. So you can be wise to use one thought to rid yourself of all the other thoughts that crowd into your mind. One thought, one image, one phrase or sentence or word that your mind can be made to fasten on. For to consciously attempt to keep the mind in a thoughtless state, in a void, is to attempt the impossible. The mind must have something to occupy it. The seemingly disconcerting conclusion is that concentration on your breathing or body sensations is very good contemplation. The awareness exercises lead to a deepening of the prayer experiences. Now is the time to expose yourself to the *Divine Sun* in SILENCE.

VI. God In My Breath

With closed eyes practise the awareness of body sensations for a while. Then come to the awareness of your breathing as done before and stay with this awareness for a few minutes *Reflect now* that this air that you are breathing is *charged with the Power and the PRESENCE of God*. Think of the air as of an Immense OCEAN that surrounds you an ocean heavily coloured with God's presence and God's being While you draw the air into your lungs you are drawing God in Be aware that you are drawing in the *Power and Presence of God* each time you breathe in... Stay in this awareness as long as you can... Notice what you feel when you become conscious that you are drawing God in with each breath you take

ANOTHER REFLECTION

1. While you breathe in, be conscious of God's Spirit coming into you Fill your lungs with the divine energy he brings with Him

2. While you breathe out, imagine you are breathing out all your impurities your fears your negative feelings Your shortcomings and weaknesses.

3. *Imagine you* see your whole body becoming radiant and alive through this process of breathing in God's life-giving Spirit and breathing out all your impurities

Stay with this awareness as long as you can without distractions.

VII. Breath—Communication With God

Devotional Prayer may here be called as 'PRAYER'; whereas 'Intuitive Prayer' may coincide roughly with CONTEMPLATION. Both type of prayers lead to union with God. Such of them is more suited to some Sadhakas than to others. According to time and need suitability of these Prayers may change.

Any Prayer that limits itself to the thinking mind alone is not prayer really but! at best, a preparation for prayer. Even among Sadhakas there is no genuine personal communication that isn't at least in some small degree heart communication, that does not contain some small degree of emotion in it. If a communication, a *sharing of thoughts*, is entirely and totally devoid of all emotion you can be sure the *intimate*, personal dimension is lacking.

Here are some variations of the previous exercise more devotional than intuitive. As the thought content in prayer is minimal—it will easily move *from the devotional to the intuitive, from the heart to the heart*.

Become aware of your breathing for a while. Now REFLECT presence of God in the atmosphere all around you.... Reflect His presence in the air you are breathing—BE CONSCIOUS OF HIS PRESENCE.... *Notice* what you feel, when you become conscious of His presence in the air you are breathing in and out....

Now express yourself to God *non-verbally*. Frequently, express a sentiment through a look on a gesture Then again by breathing. Express first of all, a *great yearning* for Him without using words, even mentally, say to Him, "MY LORD, I long for You" Just by the way breathe. You may express this by breathing in deeply, by deepening your inhalation.

Now express another attitude or sentiment: ONE OF TRUST AND SURRENDER—NO words—just through breath, "My LORD, I surrender myself entirely to you" You may do this by emphasising your exhalation, by breathing out each time as if you were sighing deeply. Each time you breathe out *feel yourself letting the whole of yourself go in God's hand*.

Then, after sometime, take up other attitudes before your LORD and express these through your breathing such as: LOVE.... CLOSENESS.... and INTIMACY ADORATION..... GRATITUDE..... PRAISE.... if you are tired of doing this, return to the beginning of this exercise and just rest peacefully in the awareness of God all around you and in the air you are breathing in and out.... Then, if you tend to get distracted, fall back on second part of the exercise and express yourself to God non-verbally once more.

VIII. Stillness

Modern man is unfortunately plagued by a nervous tension that makes it almost impossible for him to be quiet. If he actually wants to learn to pray he must first learn *to be still, to quieten himself*. In fact, this very quietness and stillness frequently becomes prayer when God manifests Himself in the form of STILLNESS.

Repeat the exercise of becoming aware of sensations in your body—*whole body. This time start with the top of your head and end it with the tips of your toes, omitting no part of the body. Beware* of every sensation in each part.... You may find some parts of your body completely devoid of sensation.... Dwell on these for a few seconds—if no sensation emerges, move on.....

As you become more proficient in this exercise you will, hopefully, sharpen your awareness to the extent that there will be no part of your body in which you do not feel several sensations.... For the time being you must be content to *dwell briefly* on the *blanks* and move on to the parts where you feel more sensations—Move slowly from head to foot.... then once again, from head to foot.... and so on for some fifteen minutes. As your awareness sharpens you will pick up sensations that you hadn't noticed before.... you may also pick up sensations that are extremely subtle, too subtle to be perceived by any but a man of deep as a whole. Feel the whole of your body as one mass of concentration and deep peace. Now become aware of yours body as a whole. Feel the whole of your body as one mass of various types of sensations.... Stay with this for a while, then return to the awareness by parts, moving from head to foot.... then, once again, rest in the awareness of your body as a whole.....

Notice now the *deep stillness* that has come over you. Notice the complete stillness of your body.... Do Not, however, rest in the stillness to the extent of losing awareness of your body.... If you are getting distracted, give yourself the occupation of moving once again from head to foot, becoming aware of sensations in each part of your body. Then, once again, notice the stillness in your body. If you are practising this in a group, then at occasions, notice the stillness in the whole room.

It is very important that you do NOT move any part of your body while doing this Sadhana. This will be difficult at first, but each time feel the urge to move, or scratch, or fidget, become aware of this as sharply as you can.... Don't give in to it.... It will gradually go away and you will become still once more.....

It is extremely painful for most people to stay still. Even physically painful and you become physically tense, spend all the time you need becoming aware of the tension.... where you feel it, what it feels like.... and stay with it till the tension disappears.

You may feel physical pain, rather severe pain. No matter how comfortable the position or posture you have adopted, your body is likely to protest against the stillness by developing aches and pains in various parts. When this happens, *a serious Sadhaka MUST RESIST* the temptation to move limbs or read just posture so as to ease the pain. Just become keenly aware of the pain.

Your awareness may wholly be absorbed by the acute pain. You may start sweating, may be profusely. Your mind may think that you are going to faint with pain; at such moment firmly decide Not to fight it, Not to run away from it, Not to desire to alleviate it, but to become aware of it, to identify with it. Then you may see that the pain sensation is broken into its component parts and you may be surprised to discover that it is composed of many sensations viz., intense burning sensation a pulling and tugging, a sharp, shooting sensation which may merge every now and then.... and a point which may keep moving from one place to another.... This point you may identify as *pain*.... As you will keep up this exercise, you shall find that you are bearing the pain quite well—i.e., *pain without suffering*.

Every Sadhaka has to experience some types of pains, as indicated above, until his body becomes accustomed to remaining perfectly still. Deal with the pain through awareness. When your body finally does become still, you will have a rich reward in the *QUIET BLISS* that this stillness will bring you. The temptation to scratch is another frequent temptation with beginners. This is because, as their awareness of their body sensations sharpens, they become aware of itching and pricking sensations that were there all along but were hidden to awareness because of the psycho-physical hardening that most of us submit our bodies to and because of the grossness of their awareness. A Sadhaka must resist such temptations during awareness Sadhana.

IX. Body Prayer

(A devotional variant of the body sensation)

First quieten yourself through the awareness of sensations in various parts of your body.... Sharpen your awareness by picking up even the *subtlest* sensations, Not just the *gross and evident* ones.... Keep your hands on knees. Now very gently move your hands and fingers so that your hands come to rest on your lap, palms facing upwards, fingers joined together.... The movement must be very, very slow.... like the opening of the petals of a flower.... And while the *movement* is going on *BE AWARE OF* each part of it.

Once your hands are resting on your lap, palms facing upwards, become aware of the sensations in palms.... Then become aware of the gesture itself, this is a gesture of prayer to God.... What meaning does this gesture have for you? What are you saying to God through it? Say without words, merely identifying with the gesture... It may give you some taste of the kind of prayer you can make with your body....

When you pray with your *body* you give power and body to your prayer. People fail to attend to their body in prayer; they fail to take their bodies along with them into the holy temple of God. When they themselves visit temples or places of worship, they stand or sit in the presence of God, but they are carelessly slouched in their seat or standing in a very slovenly fashion.... They are

still not gripped by the living presence of the Lord. Therefore, a devotee of the Lord should try to understand the meaning and purpose of 'Body Prayer'. The 'gestures' suggested are merely samples. A 'devotee' may invent his own gestures to express his 'Love', 'Praise', 'Adoration', 'Surrender', 'Gratitude'

Close your eyes. Quiet yourself through one of your awareness exercises. FEEL you are in the presence of God in a very devout way, hands devoutly joined in front of you, slowly raise your face upwards towards God.... Let your eyes continue to be closed.... What are you saying to God through your upturned face? Stay with that sentiment or communication for a few moments.... Then become as fully aware as possible of the position of your face.... of the sensations on your face.... After a few moments ask yourself once again what you are expressing to God through your upturned face and stay with that for a while....

X. The Touch of God

This is a *devotional* variant to the exercises on body sensations that you will find helpful if you have reservations about calling the body sensation exercises true prayer or contemplation. Repeat one of the body sensation exercises. Take some time to experience as many and as subtle sensations as you can in various parts of your body.....

Now make the REFLECTION: Every sensation I feel, no matter how light and subtle is the result of a bio-chemical reaction that could not exist except for God's Almighty Power.... FEEL God's power at work in the production of every single sensation.... Feel HIM touching you in each of those sensations that HE is producing.... Feel the touch of God in different parts of your body: rough, smooth, pleasurable, painful....

The experience of God need not be something sensational or out of the ordinary, unless your devotion and Divine Love is developed. There is, no doubt, an experience of God that is different from the ordinary run of experiences that we are accustomed to: there is the *deep silence* that I spoke of earlier, the glowing darkness, the emptiness that brings fulfilment.

There are *sudden, unaccountable flashes of Eternity or of the infinite* that comes to us when we least expect them, in the midst of our work. One needs to do so little, really, to *experience* God. All one needs to do is *quieten* oneself, become *still*—and become aware of the feel of your hand. Beware of the sensations in your hand.... There you have God, living and working in you, touching you, intensely near you.... Feel HIM.... Experience HIM. Most of the devotees look upon an experience like this as far too pedestrian. Surely there is more to the experience of God than just the simple feel of the sensations of one's right hand. This needs a long explanation to know the reality—Yet, you are assured that these simple and humble exercises shall help you a lot to march towards that reality.

We forget all too easily that one of the big lessons of incarnations is that God is found in the ordinary also. Do you wish to see God? Look at the fact next to you. You want to hear him? Listen to the cry of a baby, the loud laughter of a simple party, the wind rustling in the trees. Or just quieten yourself, become aware of the sensations in your body, sense HIS ALMIGHTY POWER at work in you and feel how near He is to you.

XI. Concentration

(This is an exercise in pure awareness)

Choose one sense object for a basic object of attention. It is suggested that you choose either the sensations in one part of your body or your breathing or the sounds around you.

Focus your attention on this object, but do so in such a way that if your attention shifts to something else you are immediately aware of the shift.

Let us suppose you have chosen for your basic object of attention your breathing. Well, then, concentrate on your breathing.... It is quite likely that after a while your attention will move to something else—a thought, a sound, a feeling.... Now provided you are aware of this shift of attention to something else, this shift is not to be counted as a distraction. It is important, however, that you be aware of the shift while the shift is taking place or immediately after it has taken place. Count it a distraction only if you become aware of the shift long after it has taken place.

Suppose you choose breathing as your basic object of attention. Then your exercise will possibly go something like this:—

“I am breathing.... I am breathing.... Now I am thinking.... thinking.... thinking.... Now I am listening to a sound.... listening.... listening.... Now I am irritated.... irritated. Now I feel bored.... bored.... bored....”

In this exercise, the wandering of the mind is not considered a distraction provided you are aware that your attention is shifting to some other object.... Once you have become aware of this shift, stay with the new object (thinking, listening, feeling....) for a while, then return to the basic object of your attention (breathing).... your skill in self-awareness may become so great that you will not only become aware of the shift of your attention on to some object, but even of the desire to shift, the impulse in you to shift on to something else. As when you want to move your hand you will first become conscious of the desire arising within you to move the hand, your consent to this desire, your carrying out of this desire, the very first stirring of your hand.... All of which activities are performed in an infinitesimal fraction of a second and so we find it impossible to distinguish one from the other until the silence and stillness within us has become almost total and our awareness has acquired razor edge sharpness. Self-awareness is a powerful means for increasing in love of God and of neighbour. The self-awareness heightens the love. The love, when it is genuine, fosters deeper self-awareness.

Do not go in search of abstruse means for developing your self-awareness. Begin with humble things like the awareness of the feel of your body or awareness of the things around you and then more on to exercises like the ones which are suggested here and it won't be long before you notice the fruits of peacefulness and love that heightened self-awareness brings with it.

XII. Finding God In All Things

(This is a recapitulation of most of the previous exercises)

Do any of the awareness exercises that have preceded. Take your body sensation, for instance, as the focus of your attention.... Observe not only the sensations that yield themselves readily to your awareness, the grosser sensations but also the subtler ones.... If possible, do not give the sensations any names (burning, numbness, pricking, itching, cold....). Just feel the sensations without putting a label on to them....

Do the same with sounds.... Capture as many of them as possible.... Do not try to identify the source of the sounds. Listen to the sounds without putting a label on to them.

As you proceed with this exercise you will notice a great peacefulness coming upon you, a deep silence.... Now become aware, briefly, of this peacefulness and silence.....

Feel how good it is to be here now. To have nothing to do. To just be. Be.

For those who are more devotionally inclined. Do the previous exercise until you sense the peacefulness that comes with it....

Become aware, for a brief while, of that peacefulness and silence....

Now express yourself to God non-verbally. Imagine that you are dumb and you can only communicate with your eyes and your breathing. Say to the Lord, non-verbally, “Lord, it is good to be here with you.” Or, do not communicate with the Lord at all. Just rest in His presence.

Also, for the devotionally inclined, a rudimentary exercise in finding God in all things.

Return to the world of the senses.... Become as keenly aware as possible of the air you breathe.... of the sounds around you.... of the sensations you feel in your body.... Sense God in the air, the sounds, the sensations. Rest in this whole world of the senses. Rest in God.... Surrender to this whole world of the senses (sounds, tactile sensations, colours....)

..... Surrender to God

INDIVIDUAL'S UPLIFT AND WORLD WELFARE

The Divine Life ideal offers a panacea for all the social and political ills of the modern world. The three fundamentals of Divine Life—Serve, Love, Give—are the pillars upon which an individual can stand and uplift himself and the brotherhood of man can be built. Thus the life in this world can become more fearless and happy as well as purposeful.

If one tries to observe people, one may see there three types of persons—extroverts, introverts and ambiverts. Extroverts are persons whose mind always goes outwards. They become slaves of their senses. They are after money, pleasure and passion, position and power, honour and acclaim. They are bound with the conditions and circumstances and the circumference of life. Naturally, their pursuit is of the outer and they forget the purpose and destination of human life.

Introverts are those persons who are reflective and contemplative and long to study their inner realm, the inner universe hidden within. Goethe called it as “Man’s inner universe”. They renounce pleasure and position, keeping themselves aloof—away from acclaim and honour. The charm of the world is such that one may find only a few who are introverts. Ambivert is a person who does not cut himself from the outer, but lives in the ‘inner’ and makes the outer a vehicle of the inner. He dedicates his life in selfless service of humanity and places his life as an offering at the altar of the Great Creator of the universe the Lord. Such a person realises the sanctity of service, seeking nothing for himself, keeping ablaze the Divinity within. They are the embodiments of humility and compassion and love pure and simple at heart. But without becoming introvert it is not possible for anyone to become ambivert. And such a person is called *sadhaka* in its real perspective. In fact, man is an inborn *sadhaka*, but fails to recognise the same due to misconceptions, misunderstandings, arrogance and vanity.

Holistic View

“There is a common tendency to isolate spiritual principles from politics, especially in these days of great intellectual power. Dreamers and visionaries are often brushed aside as people with their heads in the clouds”, out of touch with stark realities. In so many ways man has become wedded to the doctrine of self-salvation, self-achievement and self-dependence that in the resultant excitement of great material achievements he is in danger of forgetting the eternal truths upon which this entire universe exists and its future heritage depends.

The bad habit of complaining against others, the conditions and slackness in sincere attempts, and a lack of love for himself and humanity—and man becomes a prey of vanity which subsists on false values. Man generally thinks falsely that he is unblemished and superior to others and that others are blemished and inferior. The inevitable consequence is that he gets a perverted vision and loses the capacity for seeing and accepting Truth. If a man develops an attitude of selfishness, he is liable to poison every good sight and tie. But, if his attitude becomes one of helpfulness and understanding, he shall beautify every tie—foes will turn into friends, problems will have their solutions and man will have his salvation. Unfortunately, man thinks his gain in the loss of others, his progress in another’s downfall and his happiness in another’s unhappiness. It is a tremendous mistake and a dangerous trend born out of indiscrimination and selfishness.

The inspired visions of saints, mystics and leaders in the religious education, social, economic and artistic scene of every country have truly reflected the true aspirations of the people. From these visions was born the practical reality of everything which is recognised to be good in their way of life. And of course, everything that is discordant or bad is the outward result of individual and collective negative or evil thinking or beliefs.

One of the greatest saints of the present day Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj has placed before the world the 'Divine Life' gospel for the uplift of the individual and attainment of divinity in the end which can be summed up in six succinct words, "Serve, Love. Give, Purify, Meditate, Realise."

The physical frame of a man owes much to the world because it is made of the same five elements of which this world is composed. One has, therefore, to serve one and all without any distinction whatsoever and without any expectation of return or reward so that he may clear out his debt towards the world. One must properly understand that the acquired wealth and power are not his own but are the 'trust' of the poor and weak. In the right use of things lies the key which consists in the service of others. Service and sacrifice, hence, are the acme of duty and dutifulness. When a duty is performed as a duty for duty's sake, it becomes the source of salvation and not the bondage of attachment. But he should not have the idea of doership. Hence the service and performance of duty with a feeling of responsibility and pure heart without expectations, which is prompted by an inner sense of fellowship and unity, reduces attachment and destroys the sense of doership and thus liberates the man.

Love is light, life, eternity. There is nothing else to achieve in this world but love. In love consists the perfection of human life. All impurities are rooted in the craving for the pleasure of the senses, but love is not there. Love is the nature of the beloved and the life of the lover. One must know that faith and Love go together, because in the sense of unity resides Love and in the ending of desire is the dawn of Love. Man has sincerely to understand that the outer form of action warranted by a given situation generally makes little difference to the Love and sympathy in one's inner attitude. The man has to learn a great lesson that he has to love even a sinner, while hating the sin. A man, who is an inborn *sadhaka*, must learn the lesson of forgiveness even without asking for the same from the person who has done something wrong. Thus only the impurities of man's mind can be washed off. Of course, it requires great moral strength to seek forgiveness for one's own past wrong actions. Only one who is truly repentant and who has realised that any satisfaction of the senses derived from evil propensities is bound to reap a harvest of evil and sorrow.

Man should not be confounded with a seeming contradiction between forgiveness and justice. Man's sense of justice is distorted, on account of the limitations of his ego, his reactions are perverted. Strictly speaking, in one sense, man can do justice only to himself because he can understand his own mind and not of others. As a man and as a *sadhaka* one should, therefore, refrain from judging others; and also one should be forgiving others in so far one feels wronged by others. When the mind is devoid of hate, a long step is taken by man towards recovery. Love is the tremendous curative force for an individual and for the society. So the great Master emphasised greatly this love factor and preached in practice—Love all, hate none. God is in all, do not hurt Him.

The urge to give happiness to others helps man to destroy his own craving for pleasure. The desire for pleasure is the cause of frustration; giving and sharing what you have and serving others with compassion consumes the craving for pleasure. He warned an aspirant that generosity motivated by attachment, and renunciation caused by anger are fruitless. The truth is that the supreme giver is ours, but all the things He gives are His. Therefore, man should learn the lesson of giving and giving with happiness all the good that he possesses and not think that by giving he will lose. In fact he will gain something which is Divine and Eternal.

If the three mottos above—Serve, Love and Give—are properly understood and practised by man in his day-to-day life, he will find that his heart has become purified and he is living in a higher stage and better society. In fact, in the renunciation of one's rights and protection of rights of the others lies the secret of attainment. His mind becomes purified and then alone he is in a position to meditate and realise.

This is the gospel of Divine life which is the need of the hour, and if we follow this, we shall be serving this world in a better way on its upward march. Then alone can there be 'Ramarajya'.

Let us march on this path with confidence and faith, with sincerity and strength, with devotion and dedication. May God and Gurudev bless you!

Radiate to all thoughts of love and goodness. Never look into the faults and defects of others. Always appreciate the good in others. Overlook their weakness. Pray for the one who wishes to harm you. Bear insult and injury. Be good and do good.

—*Swami Sivananda*